



### SUMMER SEMINAR ON WORLD AFFAIRS 2009

#### AFRICOM: A SYMPTOM (OF WHAT)?

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##### Synopsis and Background Information

The U.S. is apparently the only nation that divides the planet into military zones. In February 2007, Washington announced the creation of AFRICOM – The African Command – now headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, with a mandate “to conduct sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations as directed, to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of U.S. foreign policy.”

More than a dozen governments in Africa have publicly and vehemently decried AFRICOM, not to speak of the multiple civil society organizations around the world. Critics maintain that the fortification of America’s military footprint in Africa is a move to better control oil resources, contain China’s voracious economic ambitions south of the Sahara, and turn Africa into a major front in the fight against terrorism.

Does AFRICOM have a war-fighting mission? It is quite difficult to tell from the record since it assumed its responsibilities less than a year ago on October 1, 2008. Although the U.S. Army has uniquely effective capabilities to conduct “nation-building” operations in Africa, it is equally clear that military-led operations always come at a greater cost than civilian-sponsored programs. Foreign uniformed personnel will almost systematically produce negative emotional reactions among the populations that they are supposed to help, and the agencies specialized in development lose credibility every time the military is involved. Furthermore, in Africa especially, there are historical reasons for a supreme wariness of armed forces.

##### Policy Challenges

During the last decade, U.S. foreign policy has visibly not taken measure of the telluric changes that have happened in Africa. One could argue that political instability and disastrous development strategies throughout the continent have, at their core, always been characterized by weak civil law enforcement institutions (e.g. the Police and the Judiciary).

Endemic problems like inadequate training, incompetent leadership, extremely low salaries, and stressful working conditions all combine into perfect recipes for structural situations of corruption and abuse. Many argue that AFRICOM is probably not the best response to these challenges.



# FOREIGN POLICY SCENARIO

## AFRICOM: A Symptom (of What)?

Meanwhile, with close to half a century of experience, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) currently centers all of its actions in sub-Saharan Africa around a principle known as *transformational diplomacy* with the following priorities:

1. Enhance strategic partnerships
2. Consolidate democratic transitions
3. Bolster fragile states
4. Strengthen regional and sub-regional organizations
5. Strengthen regional security capacity
6. Strengthen Africa counterterrorism cooperation and capacity
7. Stimulate Africa's economic development and growth
8. Implement presidential initiatives
9. Focus on humanitarian and development assistance programs

“Sounds like a plan,” doesn’t it?

### Expected Outcome of Your Deliberations

Create and propose ONE concrete, realistic project to implement at least 5 of the 9 USAID priorities outlined above. **Country/region? Timeframe? Institutional arrangements? Budgetary estimations? Any other considerations?**

In addition, draft in unequivocal language a brief memo (**2 sentences at most**) to the U.S. Department of State suggesting why, given the current geopolitical realities (**provide 3-5 tangible examples**), AFRICOM should or should not be eliminated.

